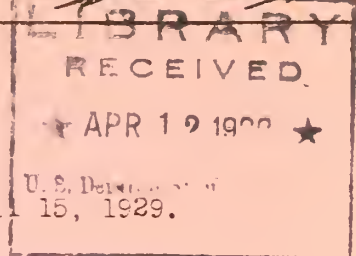


Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



Housekeepers' Chat

Monday, April 15, 1929.

Not for Publication

Subject: "More Cut Flowers for the Home." Prepared by W. R. Beattie,
Bureau of Plant Industry, U. S. D. A.

---oooOooo---

Last week W. R. B., the garden adviser, told us how to grow such flowers as daffodils, iris, nasturtiums, cornflowers, larkspur, and marigolds.

His talk must have made a good many people garden-conscious, for here are a score of letters from listeners who want information about flowers.

"Please ask W. R. B.," writes a radio friend, "how to grow Canterbury bells. My grandmother raised them in her garden, and I thought they were beautiful, with their great variety of color, ranging from light blue to white. Are they easy to grow?"

I asked W. R. B. about Canterbury bells. He says they are easy to grow, very showy in the garden, and equally good for use as cut flowers. Canterbury bells are what we call a biennial, that is, plants started this year will bloom next year. Sow the seed in a bed of fine, rich soil as soon as the weather becomes reasonably warm, then when the plants are large enough to handle, transplant them to the permanent bed where they are to bloom next year. Or you can plant them temporarily in rows, and then reset them about October. If you want a few plants for the house, you can grow them in pots. Stick the pots into the soil outdoors, for the summer, then take them into the house late in the fall, for blooming.

Another flower inquired about is candytuft. W. R. B. says that lately there have been developed some varieties of giant candytuft which are excellent for low bouquets, and for table decorations. Candytuft is very easy to grow, and can be planted in the flower border.

Here's a letter from a listener who says she likes the flower talks very much. "W. R. B. mentioned old-fashioned pinks or carnations," she writes, "but he said nothing about the Marguerite carnations. They begin flowering in a few weeks from the time of sowing the seed. Marguerite carnations have such splendid flowers, and make the nicest small bouquets you can think of."

I told W. R. B. he had neglected to mention the Marguerite carnations. "That's so," he said. "They are most popular flowers, too. In mild climates, with a little protection, the plants will remain outdoors over winter and bloom the following spring."

"I forgot to mention Shasta daisies, too. The best thing about Shasta daisies is that they are hardy, and will remain in the ground from year to year, producing wonderful flowers, of the purest glistening white, sometimes five inches across. Shasta daisies have long, strong stems, which make them a beautiful cut flower; they keep for a week or more.

"When it comes to hardy perennial plants," continued W. R. B., "there is nothing quite so handsome as the foxglove. Sow the seed this year, and grow the plants during the summer, setting them in the flower border. Next year, along about July, you will have the most gorgeous display of flower spikes -- purple, rose, white, and other colors. A half dozen plants of foxglove will generally provide plenty of flowers; it's a good idea to have them of different colors, or a mixture, for variety.

"Stiffer and more formal flowers suitable for cutting are the Helianthus, or the annual sunflowers. These flowers are remarkable for their splendid growth, and for the size and brilliancy of their flowers. If you sow the seed in a sunny spot, in April or May in most localities, you'll have no trouble in getting a stand of plants and a constant supply of bloom all through the summer. The annual sunflowers are just about as easy to grow as anything we can plant in our flower gardens.

"Quite in contrast with the sunflowers is the little plant known as baby's breath, with its misty white clusters of bloom, so charming when mixed with other cut flowers. There are several varieties of baby's breath ranging from pure white to pink. One variety has double flowers, snow-white.

"Have I said anything about heliotrope? This sweet-scented flower is another of the favorites that used to grow in old-time gardens. Our grandmothers would have considered their gardens incomplete, without a bed of heliotrope.

"In some sections of the country lupines, or blue bonnets, grow wild. People familiar with the blue bonnets of Texas know how beautiful they are, when in full bloom. Certain kinds of the lupines, or blue bonnets, can be grown throughout the greater part of the United States. The rich blue and the sky blue strains are the prettiest."

I showed W. R. B. one letter asking about poppies, and when they should be planted. He says that most varieties of poppies are not really suitable for use as cut flowers, although certain of the double annual poppies, like the Shirley, may be included in the cut flower list. Sow the seed as early in the spring as possible, right where the flowers are to grow, because they do not stand transplanting. The seeds are small. Sow them very very thin, and just barely cover the seeds. Press the surface of the soil slightly, with a small piece of board, and water the soil slightly. The seeds should come up in a few days. If you want a succession of blooms, make two or three sowings.

W. R. B. also mentioned stocks, the wonderful annual flowering plants that can be grown either in the flower border, or in pots. Stocks are easy to grow, and have a striking variety of color.

Before I left W. R. B., I asked him about zinnias. I'll always have a soft spot in my heart for zinnias. Way back in -- well, way back, anyway, when I lived in a state noted for its hot summers, I used to plant all sorts of flowers. But usually the zinnias were the only ones which survived the hot sunshine. When my sweet peas, nasturtiums, and pansies gave up in despair, and wilted down to the baked soil, the zinnias would continue to hold up their heads. I don't believe any other flower is so easily grown as the zinnia, or stands so much abuse. Some people may not agree with me, but I think zinnias, with their wonderful range of color, are among the most attractive of the hardy garden flowers. Of course the zinnia doesn't stand much chance, in a popularity contest.

By the way, did you notice the story about the vote taken recently, on the most popular wild flower? The American Nature Association, which conducted the poll for the most popular wild flower, reported on March 18 that of more than 86,000 votes cast in a nation-wide campaign the wild rose led with more than 31,000 votes. The columbine was next, and the golden-rod third. Phlox, violets, and daisies were running strong, and dogwood and mountain laurel were holding their own.

Well-a-day! We can't talk about flowers forever. Tomorrow's on the way, and Aunt Sammy must see what's to be served for dinner, on Tuesday.

Tuesday: "Planning a Summer Vacation."

